PRESS RELEASE

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sustainindy

EPA APPROVES MODIFICATIONS TO CITY'S CONSENT DECREE FOR ENHANCEMENTS TO MAJOR SEWER OVERFLOW PROJECT

Deep Rock Tunnel Connector to capture more sewage sooner, serve as first phase of citywide tunnel system and bring savings on long-term sewage overflow program costs

INDIANAPOLIS – Mayor Greg Ballard announced plans today to enhance the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector, one of Indianapolis' largest combined sewer overflow consent decree projects – enhancements that will assist in reducing the amount and frequency of raw sewage overflows years ahead of schedule.

The city began negotiating the enhancements to the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector, formerly known as the Interplant Connect project, with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in May of 2008. The EPA and the Department of Justice recently granted final approval of the project. The city of Indianapolis is working under a federally-mandated plan to curb the overflow of raw sewage into our rivers and streams. The $1.7 billion, 20-year plan, is required under a consent decree with the EPA and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM).

"This approval from the EPA is a huge win for the city of Indianapolis and our environment," Mayor Ballard said. "Not only have we figured out a way to do this project better and quicker, but we're exceeding the requirements of the consent decree; we're preventing even more sewage from spilling into the White River than what was originally required by the EPA and IDEM."

The $257 million (2008 estimate) Deep Rock Tunnel Connector project is funded through sanitary sewer user fees and is a part of the recent sewer rate increase approved by the City-County Council. Construction is expected to begin in 2011, and the project will be complete and in operation by May 31, 2016.

More sewage out of our waterways sooner

Currently, when as little as a quarter inch of rain falls, combined sewers reach capacity, and raw sewage overflows into local rivers and streams. The Deep Rock Tunnel Connector will address three of those Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) locations: CSO 008 near Harding Street and the White River; CSO 117 near Southern Avenue and the White River; and CSO 118 near West Street and White River Parkway East Drive.

The original project design would have only addressed CSO 117. Now, in addition to capturing the sewage from CSO 117, the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector will also capture the sewage from CSOs 008 and 118, two of the city's largest overflow points, years ahead of the original consent decree schedule. This means an additional 3.5 billion gallons of raw sewage will be captured and treated compared to the original project design.

(more)

The first step in a citywide tunnel system

The new Deep Rock Tunnel Connector will be the first phase of the city's overall tunnel storage and transport system. From the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector, additional storage tunnels will be extended along White River, Fall Creek, Pleasant Run and Pogues Run to create a collective, underground storage facility for sewage. All sewage stored and transported underground in this tunnel system is sewage that otherwise could have gone directly into our waterways. The tunnel system is a component of the federally-mandated plan to reduce raw sewage overflows.

Thanks to the new "storage and transport" concept of the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector, raw sewage captured at CSOs 008, 117 and 118 will be stored in the tunnel and then transported to the wastewater treatment plant. This enhanced tunnel will have the capacity to store over 54 million gallons of raw sewage during large storm events, and when the project is completed, sewage overflows into Indianapolis waterways will be significantly reduced.

Managing neighborhood impacts

Over six miles long, the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector will extend from the Southport Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant located at Southport Road and Tibbs Avenue, to north of the Belmont Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant near the White River and Harding Street.

In the initial concept, the project would have been constructed in soft ground under high groundwater conditions at depths of 35 to 75 feet below ground surface with an internal diameter of 12 feet. Now, the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector will be constructed more than 250 feet below ground surface in bedrock, with an internal diameter of 18 feet.

"This is a great example of the city really listening to its citizens," Mayor Ballard said. "Life for residents in this project area will be much easier now thanks to these modifications."

Contaminated groundwater areas discovered along the initial project route will now be avoided, which will ease environmental concerns. Since the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector will be constructed below groundwater levels, impacts to area wells, gas lines, electrical lines, existing sewers and other utilities will be significantly reduced. Traffic disruptions and property easements needed to construct the project will also be minimized.

Sustainable concepts bring savings

DPW has been working to incorporate sustainable concepts into the design of the Deep Rock Tunnel Connector. Most notably, one of the project's two previously planned pumping stations will now be eliminated, resulting in energy savings since the system will require less energy to run and operations can be simplified. This savings will be applied to future projects associated with the city's consent decree.

The project's limited disruptions to utilities will result in further savings. In addition, DPW will emphasize the beneficial reuse of the limestone bedrock which will be removed during construction of the tunnel.

Mayor Ballard launched SustainIndy and created the Office of Sustainability in October 2008. Both represent an innovative enterprise aimed at delivering long-term cost savings to the city, building the local economy, improving our quality of life and enhancing our environmental and public health. Its efforts are designed to aggressively move Indianapolis forward in making it one of the most sustainable cities in the Midwest. For more information, visit www.sustainindy.org.

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